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As to the method employed by Dr Parsons in the use of ethnological material, it may as well be conceded that certain acts of mankind are everywhere to be found and to be expected because they are the results of the physiological and psychological equipment common to man. We in America refuse to be particularly interested in such universal human traits because we have chosen to narrow our field to those phases of culture which are sufficiently independent of such causes as to be subject to social transmission. We are in fact primarily interested at present in that one matter alone—transmission.

Some time in the future Dr Parsons's book may be a source of ethnological information concerning the inhabitants of the United States of the twentieth century. She is by no means an indifferent observer.

P. E. GODDARD

### NORTH AMERICA

*The Double-Curve Motive in Northeastern Algonkian Art.* By FRANK G. SPECK. (Memoir 42, Geological Survey of Canada, Ottawa, 1914.) V, 17 pp., 25 figs., 18 pls.

This paper, dealing with a fundamental motive in Algonkian art, is a pioneer work in a region where motives often attain a highly intricate and modified character.

The motive itself is what may be termed the "double-curve," consisting of two opposed incurves as a foundation element, with embellishments more or less elaborate modifying the enclosed space, and with variations in the shape and proportions of the whole. This simple double-curve appears as a sort of unit, capable of being subjected to such a variety of augments, not infrequently distortive, as to become scarcely recognizable at first or second sight.

While this definition cannot be rigorously applied to some of the Iroquoian types of this motive, Dr Speck does well to consider them merely as modified forms, since they, too, consist of two curved elements arranged in the symmetrical manner common to decorative designs.

In referring to the distribution of this motive, Dr Speck seems to have made a faulty inference. He finds it as the primary unit of design among the northeastern Algonkin, and also occurring among the Iroquois, Delaware, Central Algonkin tribes, Blackfoot, and Plains-Cree. Elsewhere he states:

The motive in this region is so strong that it has been conveyed to Oklahoma by the central Algonkian tribes who have moved there, and it is now to be seen in the art of the Osage, Kansa, and other southern Plains tribes (p. 14).

We may well ask why this trait is found only among the Siouan tribes, the Winnebago, Iowa, Osage, and Kansa, as Dr Speck notes, and some Mississippi Siouan, who have been in contact with the Central Algonkin in their historical habitat, and not among other and non-Siouan southern Plains tribes, such as the Kiowa and Comanche? It can only be that this is but one of the many cultural traits that these Siouan tribes have borrowed from the Central Algonkin; a proceeding that has been carried to such a high degree that they may be called "Algonkinoid-Siouans."

Dr Speck has found an areal differentiation of the double-curve motive. The areas may be briefly characterized as follows: Naskapi area, a distinctive type, with the curves sweeping down and outward, with a cross-bar at their point of origin, and also quite generally the trilobed figure at this point; Micmac area, a rectangular form of the motive; Northwestern area, the double-curve subordinated to floral designs; Central Algonkin area, a broadened form of the double-curve; and the Iroquoian area, with a curved figure somewhat resembling the double-curve, but with the curves often turned outward instead of inward. In interpreting this differentiation the author offers two hypotheses.

What the origin and history of the double-curve design may have been it seems unsafe to say. It occurs most abundantly and is most characteristic among the extreme northern and eastern Algonkian tribes. Since it is restricted to them as a fundamental motive, it may be regarded from two points of view: it may have originated in the northeast and drifted westward, or it may have been derived from an original old American design element that became remodelled and specialized to its present form among some of these tribes and was subsequently adopted by their neighbors in general. The latter supposition seems a little more plausible (p. 2).

However, the fixity of the motive in the northeastern Algonkin area, and the many variations occurring on the borders of this area lend a high degree of probability to the first alternative. Indeed, the author's final statement is as follows:

In conclusion it seems reasonable to suggest from the material at hand that we have, in the double-curve motive, an originally non-symbolic decorative element, a presumably indefinite plant or floral figure, common to all the members of the northeastern Algonkian group both north and south of the St. Lawrence. Passing from this primary area, the motive has been borrowed by other tribes westward, mostly Algonkian, and subjected to local modification (p. 17).

We have still left on our hands a further problem: that of the rela-

tion of this motive to the *whole* art of the Woodlands area. We have among the Algonkin two art centers, that of the northeastern Algonkian tribes, already characterized, and that of the Central Algonkin, where highly developed floral motives hold the field. Further, in both of these areas we find two design techniques, on textiles executed by women, and on bark by men. These bark designs are highly realistic in both areas, and it has been suggested that the birchbark realistic art of the Central Algonkin has been carried over into the realm of textiles with a consequent effect on the designs used in that technique. As Dr Speck has collected some exceedingly interesting data on the birchbark designs among the northeastern Algonkin, we await with interest his interpretation of their influence on textile design in that area.

LESLIE SPIER

*On the Shell Heaps of Maine.* By F. B. LOOMIS and D. B. YOUNG. (American Journal of Science, iv, Vol. xxxiv; No. 199, July, 1912, pp. 17-42.)

This paper deals with the remains found by excavation of shell heaps on the Maine coast, "one half of the time being devoted to a careful survey of one heap on Sawyer's Island, near Boothbay, the second month being spent in a more rapid investigation of several heaps for comparison."

After stating that shell heaps are found along the coast from Maine to New York City (and to Florida and beyond, the authors might have added) we are given an account of the careful study of the Sawyer's island shell heap. "Finds" are defined for us in a discriminating manner (p. 19), and the careful record of their occurrence is given in tabular and graphic form. Six layers, alternately of ashes and shells are shown in the typical sections of the shell heaps. The authors deduce from the rather inconclusive evidence of the occurrence of the lowest layer as "clear ashes," that "those camp sites were used for a long time before the habit of eating molluscs was acquired." But this deduction is open to doubt until an explanation is forthcoming as to the *raison d'être* of similar ash layers between strata of shells. In this connection, the diagram of a section of the Sawyer's Island heap (p. 21) showing the distributing finds would be improved by the addition of lines indicating the position of the several layers, that their relation to the strata of relatively abundant remains might be made clear. From a general consideration of the remains in the heaps, particularly the number and types of bone implements, it would appear that the camps were occupied for hunting and fishing, the occupation seasonal, and the use of particular food-animals